

Saline River Recreation

Imagine paddling a canoe down an unspoiled river past towering cliffs and wildflower meadows, just as the Caddo Indians did long ago. You may be surprised to learn that this daydream can be a reality on the Saline River in Arkansas. The Saline is known for its scenic beauty, excellent fishing, and sunny gravel bars for picnics and swimming.

Native Americans of several tribes probably enjoyed this river for similar uses, as well as its service as an important travel route. Large earthen mounds built by the Caddo Indians for ceremonial and burial purposes have been excavated along the river. In 1999 an ancient dugout canoe was found which had been crafted in the fashion of the Caddos. Archaeologists estimate that the canoe was built around the year 1,100.

The river received its name centuries later as industry grew along its banks during the 1800s. The name Saline is thought to come from the salt works near Benton. However, after riverboat commerce was replaced by railroads in the 1930s, most manufacture and trade along the Saline ended. Now the entire length of river is used almost exclusively for fishing and recreation, and many miles of its course can only be accessed by boat.

It is one of the last free-flowing rivers in the region, and those who choose to paddle the entire 204 miles will see a variety of geography. The Saline River originates in the Ouachita Mountains as a clear, cold-water stream running fast over shoals and slowing in occasional quiet pools. As the mountains give way to foothills, the river flattens and slows as it winds through forests, fields and farmland. Boaters find themselves in a Delta-type bayou before the Saline converges with the Ouachita River.

If you're an angler, you can probably picture the types of fish you could catch along the length of the Saline. The abundance of fish and thrill of the catch attract fishermen of all ages. You can hook largemouth bass, catfish, walleye, crappie and bream, but the Saline is best known for smallmouth bass.

Are you ready to grab a canoe, cooler and fishing gear and head to the gentle waters of the Saline River? Come and enjoy this nature-lover's paradise here in the heart of Arkansas, the Natural State.

Source(s):

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. (2011). Saline River. Retrieved February 3, 2011 from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=2649> .

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